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SCHOOL READINESS

Technical Assistance Alert

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Services**
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ALERT Number: SR/TA 00-01

Date: December 28, 1999

X Priority Schools

X Severe Need Schools

TO: Mayors, Superintendents, School Readiness Councils, Chair/Co-Chair and Liaisons

FROM: Paul F. Flinter, Chief, Department of Education
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services

Peter Palermino, Manager, Child Care Team
Department of Social Services

SUBJECT: Parent Involvement, Parent Education and Outreach

The State Departments of Education and Social Services are issuing this Technical Assistance Alert to provide guidance to School Readiness Councils and their subgrantees on the School Readiness Component of Parent Involvement, Parent Education and Outreach.

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

ACCREDITATION

School Readiness Legislation requires that programs be accredited either by the National Association for The Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or Head Start. Programs accredited by the American Montessori System or New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) must meet the Connecticut Standards for Preschool and Readiness Programs. Within each of these accreditation systems there are specific standards addressing the need to involve parents as partners in their child's education.

QUALITY COMPONENTS

Parent involvement must be addressed by the school readiness programs as one of the ten (10) quality components required by the legislation. These activities include partnering with parents in their child's education, providing parenting education and outreach and involving parents in the governance of the program.

RATIONALE

School Readiness Programs have a unique opportunity to develop partnerships between parents and their child's early education and care program. This will not only support the growth and development of young children but will build a stronger relationship for the future. Research demonstrates that parents who take an active role in their young child's education are more likely to continue that involvement when their child enters elementary school and beyond. When families are involved in a child's education, the child tends to succeed not just in school but throughout life. Early care and education programs need to engage parents now, at the beginning of their child's education.

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working to provide quality early care and education programs to Connecticut's families

WHAT IS BEST PRACTICE?

- Programs recognize that parents are partners with staff in the education of their child and that each brings strengths to that relationship.
- Programs have written policies and procedures developed with the assistance of parents that clearly outline the program's philosophy, curriculum, and strategies for addressing children's needs.
- Program staff respect individual differences in families including culture, language, and life styles.
- There is open two-way communication that includes written and oral methods to keep parents and staff informed on the day to day events in a child's life
- There are systems in place that identify and meet the needs of parents by linkages to collaborating agencies.
- There are systems in place that support the growth and development of parents in leadership and governance roles.
- Programs provide opportunities for parent involvement at various levels. This allows parents to participate according to their abilities that may be affected by other factors, time or stresses in their lives.
- The program employs an Open Door policy for parents to observe or participate in their child's class.
- The program has a "parent area" space that includes books and materials for their use. Parents are made to feel welcome to stop in this area to meet other parents, review materials, or talk to a staff member.

OTHER PROVISIONS

The State Board of Education supports the concept of the parent school partnership throughout a child's school career and has published the ***Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships*** for public school programs in kindergarten through high school. Subsequently, the State Department of Education developed ***A Guide to Using The Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships in Early Care and Education Programs***. Both of these publications are based on the work of Dr. Joyce Epstein of the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships and offer guidance to educators and parents on how to develop a comprehensive partnership in the education of their child. The guiding standards are:

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| 1. <i>Helping parents to parent</i> | 4. <i>Strengthening learning at home</i> |
| 2. <i>Communicating with families</i> | 5. <i>Involving parents in decision-making</i> |
| 3. <i>Expanding volunteer programs</i> | 6. <i>Collaborating with the community.</i> |

Attached to this ALERT is ***A Guide to Using The Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships in Early Care and Education Programs*** that provides suggested sample activities for each of the standards. As School Readiness Programs develop their parent component, they need to utilize the indicators of their own accreditation system (NAEYC, Head Start, NEASC) which can be implemented with the strategies and activities suggested in the guide. This will help to ensure a strong parent involvement program that will continue a familiar framework for parents when their child enters the public school which utilizes the principles of the ***Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships***. Also attached is a list of resources, materials and publications that focus on parent involvement and might be of assistance to your programs.

If you have questions, or would like additional information, please contact Joyce Staples, School Readiness Program Manager, Connecticut State Department of Education (phone: 860-807-2057); Email: joyce.staples@po.state.ct.us).

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